

# DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MARCH-APRIL

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ONE SHILLING

## FILMS IN SCHOOL

SINCE the New Year nearly every educational association in the country has gone on record with its views on how, and by whom, teaching films ought to be produced and distributed. Representatives of the Association of Education Committees, the County Councils Association, the National Union of Teachers, the Joint Committee of the Four Secondary Associations and the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions have subscribed to a MEMORANDUM ON THE PRODUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL FILMS which has been submitted to the Minister of Education with a request that she shall convene a conference of all interested bodies to discuss its recommendations.<sup>1</sup> (This document is described below as the "5-group memorandum".)

Twenty-five other educational bodies attended a meeting held on February 23rd under the chairmanship of Dr. G. B. Jeffery, Director of the University of London Institute of Education, to consider a statement prepared by the Scientific Film Association, the Science Masters' Association, and the Association of Women Science Teachers. After listening to the views of the Visual Education Centre, Exeter, and the British Film Institute, the meeting subscribed to a memorandum headed, THE SUPPLY, DISTRIBUTION AND APPROPRIAL OF EDUCATIONAL FILMS AND RELATED MATERIAL, which was also forwarded to the Minister of Education.<sup>2</sup> (This document is described below as the "25-group memorandum".)

Though these two documents differ in some respects, they are in agreement on basic principles. It is now clear that every educational association in the country supports the national sponsorship of educational films and recognises that their circulation must be taken out of the realm of commercial speculation. (A few educational bodies still seem to believe that, ideally, educational films ought to be made and issued like school text-books, but even the warmest supporter of the text-book theory admits that it can only be realised, if ever, in the distant future.) These views are also endorsed by the Arts Enquiry, whose chapter on educational films is reproduced by B.F.I. in a recent broadsheet,<sup>3</sup> and by nearly every documentary of standing in the country.

Agreement goes deeper than mere subscription to principle. Both documents we have mentioned, as well as the Arts Enquiry, propose a central authority, appointed mainly or wholly by the educational world, to control film production and distribution policy. In each case, it is stressed that this authority must be independent of the Ministry of Education in status and outlook. It must reflect the views of the teaching profession and not of the Ministry. The 5-group memorandum calls for a National Committee for Educational Films which will be "largely representative of the local

education authorities and the teachers". This committee, with "assessors from the Ministry", would plan education policy and arrange for films to be commissioned through the films division of the C.O.I. For each film, "one or more educational advisers" would be appointed. The 25-group memorandum calls for an Advisory Council for Visual Education, "the membership of which should be determined after consultation with the educational organisations and subject associations, and which shall include a substantial proportion of practising teachers, as well as other members appointed for their expert knowledge". This council "would correlate information and experience, initiate research, and advise the Ministry as to programmes of work to be undertaken". The Arts Enquiry calls for a Visual Education Council which shall draw up, in consultation with the films division of C.O.I., an annual programme of educational film production. This Council would also appoint teaching and subject experts to work with the producers. It would consist of "practising teachers, both in schools and universities, school inspectors, and educational administrators". Its members would be selected "for their knowledge and experience of the use of visual aids and for their standing in the teaching profession". They would not be appointed as representatives of organisations. Two of the three documents explicitly bar the British Film Institute from being the Committee or Council in question, or even from being associated with it except incidentally.

The constitution of the proposed Visual Education Committee or Council is of first importance, for it will determine whether we are to have a lively, dynamic policy in visual matters or a pedestrian, bureaucratic one. If the former, the Committee must consist of members appointed for their personal qualities and not because they reflect the policy or politics of some parent organisation. The Committee must be able to stand on its own feet. It must make its decisions without thought of special interests whether these derive from the educational or the film world. (To avoid the danger that such a Committee might develop along lines which are not in the best interests of education, it might be wise to lay down that it shall make a report of its stewardship each year to a representative body of teachers—a kind of teachers' parliament.)

The 25-group memorandum and the Arts Enquiry both underline the point that the new Committee must be expert, and not merely a collection of delegates, but the 5-group memorandum would make the new Committee "largely representative of the local education authorities and the teachers". Whether this means that the members of the Committee must be representative of these interests and report back to them, or whether it means merely that the members

should be drawn from these sources in the first place, is uncertain. Perhaps those responsible for drafting this part of the memorandum could not agree among themselves and therefore made it ambiguous deliberately. Whatever the precise meaning of the phrase, we hope that everyone concerned will press for a Committee, expert in its own right and above the battle of competing special interests.

There is a fair measure of agreement on matters of distribution as well as of production. All groups consider that there ought to be local film libraries, backed up by a Central Film Library. All groups require that the distribution of films to schools should be free, though this point is made implicitly and not explicitly in the 5-group memorandum. The latter also proposes that the local libraries shall purchase prints from the central agency at a price calculated ultimately to make the production programme pay for itself. The 25-group memorandum would make the films available to the local libraries free of charge, and the Arts Enquiry dismisses the question without coming to a conclusion. Most of the documentary producing units consider that all distribution should be free.

For our part, we believe that experience will show that it is not only undesirable to charge for the supply of prints to local libraries but also very difficult. Large numbers of films used in schools (though not specifically designed for them) are already available, without charge, from the Central Film Library and other sources, and this practice is certain to continue. A service of films, some of which carry a charge and some of which do not, will be almost unmanageable. There would also be an objectionable tendency for the poorer local film libraries to base their orders for printing less on an objective study of local requirements than on a choice partly influenced by what they could get for nothing. In any case, whatever is done will have to be paid for out of the public purse. According to the 5-group memorandum the money would come partly from the rates and partly from grants-in-aid; the 25-group memorandum would place the charges for the supply of films squarely on the public exchequer, with the application of all the safeguards that such a process requires.

Two points are overlooked in the 5-group memorandum, which generally takes rather a narrower view of the various problems than the other groups. It will be essential for the local film libraries to service all classes of user, an independent national system of objective appraisal must be developed as a guide and corrective, not only to the new Committee but to the producers. In the first case, since the film has now become an integral part of our cultural life, it will be not only inefficient, but anti-social, if local film libraries do not provide a service to adult education groups and universities,

film societies and cultural organisations of all kinds, whether they come under the local authority or not. If necessary this wider service must be financed by grants from the Ministry of Education. Secondly, the objective appraisal of films is fundamental to a scheme of educational film production. Evidence must be collected to guide producers to conceive their films in terms which will make each of the greatest possible use in its particular age group. Each film must not only be appraised by teachers, but also studied in the class-room. Finally, the new Committee must compile and issue a catalogue in which all the available films in the country are listed, whatever their source, with synopses, appraisals (made by some independent body) and notes on the audience ranges for which they appear to be suited.

From a close consideration of all the memoranda it is clear that differences of opinion between the various groups are relatively negligible in comparison with points of agreement. This remarkable unanimity has been reached because all teachers in Britain have decided that they, and no one else, shall command the film in education. Indeed, so firm is the general determination in this matter that it is difficult to see how the backward influences which are known still to lurk in some of the higher reaches of the Ministry of Education can much longer impede the national will.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in *Education* for February 22nd, 1946 (Vol LXXXV No. 2250).

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in *The Times Educational Supplement* for March 2, 1946 (No. 1609). Besides those groups responsible for drafting the original statement, the following subscribed to the memorandum in question: Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education; Association of University Teachers; Association of Assistant Masters; British Association of Commercial and Industrial Education; Cambridge Education Committee; Classical Association; Educational Handwriting Association; English New Education Fellowship; Film Council of the South-West; Historical Association; Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters; Incorporated Association of Headmistresses; Incorporated Association of Headmasters; Ling Physical Education Association; Mathematical Association; National Association of Girls and Mothers' Clubs; National Association of Schoolmasters; National Union of Women Teachers; National Association of Head Teachers; School Nature Study Union; London Schools Film Society.

<sup>3</sup> *The Film in Schools*. (No. 245 of the P.E.P. Broadsheet, "Planning" issued on February 15, 1946.) The Arts Enquiry was established in 1941 to study the organisation of the visual arts. It has been sponsored by Dartington Hall Trustees in association with the Nuffield College School Reconstruction Survey.

## NOTES OF THE MONTH

### More Two-way Traffic

IN response to our complaint in the last issue that no proper efforts are being made to arrange the reciprocal circulation in Britain of film from overseas, Mr. R. E. Tritton, Director of the Film Department of the British Council, writes to correct what he feels is a misstatement of fact:—

"You say that so far as you know, neither the M.O.I. nor the British Council has done anything to encourage this two-way traffic. I can't help feeling that before your writer made that remark he might, perhaps, have rung up the British Council to ask what they were doing, rather than he should assume that they were doing nothing.

"As regards France, when M. de Fonbrune visited London in January:

- (1) Communications Department of the Council, at very short notice, made arrangements with Customs and Excise for

his films and equipment to be brought in;

- (2) Science and Medical Departments assembled, at very short notice, a gathering of scientists and scientific film people;
- (3) A very successful showing of his film was made under British Council auspices.

"Again, we are at the moment making arrangements for some of Dr. Comandon's films to be brought to London and shown under the British Council auspices. Yet again, we are at the moment making arrangements for a number of Danish films, which Arthur Elton has brought to the country to be shown by the press and to various interested people in this country. We are delighted to receive this evidence that the Council is taking this reciprocity question seriously. But it is still a matter of regret that there is no department of the Council or the C.O.C. wholly devoted to the handling of cultural films from overseas which would not only deal with films once they have arrived, but which would seek out suitable films and import them.

# IN THE MINDS OF MEN

By Sinclair Road, Secretary of the Federation of Documentary Film Units

"SINCE WARS begin in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." The constitution of UNESCO begins with these words. It was adopted in November, 1945, after a three-week conference in London attended by delegates from forty-three countries. Russia was not represented, but one of the fifteen seats on the new organisation's council has been left vacant. UNESCO is one of the "specialised agencies", like the FAO, UNRRA and ILO, which the United Nations intend to bring within the framework of the Economic and Social Council "to promote solutions of international, economic, social and related problems, known and international cultural and educational co-operation", as laid down in the San Francisco Charter. Like these other agencies UNESCO was established to meet an urgent need. The educational resources of Europe and the Far East have been shattered; schools, teachers and materials gone. It was one of the main functions of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education which met in London in 1942 to consider what help could be given in the rebuilding of the educational systems of Europe. It was this body which prepared the original draft proposals for an educational and cultural organisation; and it was on its behalf that the British Government called the conference in London. But it is more than short-term needs that are in question, and UNESCO's terms of reference have been widely drawn. "To contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture", may seem a grandiloquent phrase, but at least the stresses are right, however obvious the strains may be.

It is interesting to compare the origin and constitution of UNESCO and those of similar League of Nations bodies. Not only different circumstances, but also different ideas were at work in the two cases. Intellectual questions were not incorporated in the Covenant of the League after the 1914-18 War, as they are in the San Francisco Charter. The need for a committee to encourage "intellectual co-operation" as it was termed so pontifically, was not raised on the League of Nations Council until 1921. Subsequently, a committee was established, an intellectual co-operation organisation, various expert committees, forty-four national committees and two executive bodies, one at Geneva and an Institute in Paris. Films, however, were not the specific concern of any of these bodies. But in the meantime the Italian Government had on its own initiative set up an International Institute of Educational Cinematography which was recognised as an organ of the League in 1928. This body tried to develop the educational uses of the film in each country, among other things negotiating a convention for the duty free exchange of educational films in 1933. But it was too much under the thumb of the Italian Government; it did not achieve any standing and came to an abrupt and unlamented end when Italy left the League in 1937.

This inter-war "intellectual co-operation" had certain marked characteristics. It was fostered by several bodies, but all of them were restricted to intellectual questions outside the range of teaching, an important limitation. In their work they tended to concentrate on the exchange of specialist information among experts. Some of it was valuable work but limited in effect. Attempts at reaching a wider world public usually took the form of trying to popularise the work of international relations rather than the actual work of men's minds. Mass media like the film were not employed as an integral part of the work of exchanging information; the attention paid to them seemed more of an afterthought.

This bit of history is important in understanding the way in which the new body has been set up. In the first place UNESCO has

been constituted to deal in all intellectual matters: it is not excluded from education. Secondly, and this point was stressed repeatedly at the London conference, it is to be the means of encouraging "the common understanding of the peoples of the world", not merely understanding between experts. Finally, the use of such media of mass communication as the Press, the radio and the film, has been recognised as an essential part of this work.

Given the recognition accorded to the film as one of the essential media of exchange, an immediate problem is, how can UNESCO set about developing its use on the widest possible scale? Should it aim to set up a film department with its own production unit, library and distribution service, or should it occupy the role of an initiating and co-ordinating body relying on the production and distribution services that exist in each country? Secondly, should it be concerned only with the non-theatrical use of films, or should it include cinema distribution in its plans? These questions are of particular relevance at the moment, as the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO established by the November Conference is now considering the whole question of organisation, with a special sub-committee dealing with mass media. Proposals have been submitted by various bodies including a committee representing Government departments and film organisations called together under the auspices of the BFI, and by the Federation of Documentary Film Units. It appears to be generally agreed that the creation of a central production unit within UNESCO would be inadvisable at this stage, particularly in view of the present shortage of trained technicians and equipment. There are in existence in a number of countries experienced documentary units through which UNESCO could sponsor films. In sponsoring films UNESCO would require the services of an advisory council and a director with wide first-hand experience of the production and use of documentary and educational films. Various technicians may also be necessary, but primarily UNESCO should aim to get the maximum out of existing services. On the question of a library of films there is greater room for divergence of opinion. But here, too, it would appear more practical, instead of trying to build up a collection of all existing documentary and educational films, which would make great demands in terms of staff and accommodation, for UNESCO to operate an international booking agency through which one country could book films held by libraries in other countries. In this case UNESCO should only hold copies of films which it had itself sponsored. On the question of distribution it would seem sensible if UNESCO restricted its activities to the non-theatrical field. There is an evident risk of UNESCO overlapping with UNO, which is also intending to set up a film section within its Department of Public Information. If UNO's information department is concerned with publicising UNO activities on the widest possible scale, let its film section aim at the cinema audiences of the world using all the theatrical channels which are open, newsreels, news films like "March of Time" and "World in Action" and suitable documentaries to secure the necessary coverage. UNESCO could then get on with the work which its title, constitution and the many urgent needs of the day require. It is a platitude to say that this work will require considerable energy and enterprise, but it is an encouraging sign that such media of communication as the film are to be widely employed. The recent appointment of Dr. Julian Huxley, F.R.S., as Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission, is a good start. He has wide interests outside his own subject and a clear understanding of the social relevancies of science and the arts and of the part which the film, the radio and the Press play in shaping the minds of men.

# SLOW BUT NOT SO SURE

G. S. Bagley, of the National Film Board of Canada, looks at visual aids

WHEN I ARRIVED in England two months ago I was not particularly orientated towards visual education. We had done a little at the N.F.B. for the armed forces, but had not specialised in it. My behaviour during the first few weeks of my visit must have been quite a creditable imitation of a bloodhound, circling around prior to pulling strongly away on an interesting scent. The interesting scent for me proved to lead into the visual education field and I soon decided that "visual aids" was a depressing label to hang around the neck of such an interesting animal. I also found quickly that there was argument and disagreement in the field. For instance, in using the term "visual aids" I am already upon dangerous ground, for there is apparently a great gulf between the happy-go-lucky visual aider and the profound visual educationalist absorbed in V.E. psychology. Now this academic argument is rather ludicrous: are we to suppose that the latter earnest gentlemen conceive education as being entirely visual? If they do not then all illustrative material must be classed as an "aid".

I'm not a teacher. Neither am I a film man in the sense of film making. But I am an educationalist, for all who have practised in the graphic arts find themselves willy-nilly in that class. I find that quite a lot has been written about visual education and to be candid I think that it is rather on the dull side. Why?

The subject is far from dull, it's exciting. Graphic forms are going to brighten up the curriculum. Buildings are taking on new shapes, their insides will be much more pleasant, the new visual education material—with its attendant colour—is going to delight the eye, I hope. But the existing visual aids do not delight me at the moment. They remind one of a shopping expedition in a badly bombed town. You travel all over the lot and then find that the greengrocer is about sixteen blocks to the north, and it's getting darker every minute. In the National Film Board we do not like darkness or even dimness, so we decided to have a light. The co-ordinating art director came into action.

I mention this because there is one word—co-ordinating—which is frequently found to be missing when studying the visual education field. Without co-ordinated media, each doing a specific job, there can be no such thing as visual education. There is nothing very difficult about it if we know the meaning of the word. The Oxford defines co-ordination as *equal in status*. The following co-ordinated media are essential to a good visual education plan:

- Booklets and leaflets.
- Charts, diagrams and maps.
- Displays.
- Epidiascope material.
- Films, sound, silent and strip.
- Models.
- Newspapers (wall).
- Teaching Notes.

Simple, isn't it? Yet how many people are planning this way?

The film, of course, occupies a prominent position in our daily lives, in fact the film and the newspaper probably educate (don't forget

that education is a broad subject) more men, women, and children than any other media. Yet I'm told that there are very few films, that teachers wish to use. I'm sure that, as the technique of film-making is so competent, this slight *impasse* will be solved by the agreement between the film makers and the teachers on the requirements of the film as a unit in the visual education field. The fact remains that there are films in use in the schools, quite a number of them.

How about the film strip? Well, it's not really in being yet. Here is a lovely handy medium, cheapish, easy to make, and as portable as hell. But it must not be thought of as a poor relation of the movie. It should be a film in itself, carefully planned, and the research, especially for the pictorial matter, painstaking. The illustrative material is very important for here is a method of bringing good graphic art before the children. (A fine 18th-century copperplate looks magnificent when blown up to six feet wide.) There is one more point about film strips that I'd like to mention: some people are thinking of them in terms of clipping up, re-arranging, using in sections or even individual frames. This is not the function of the film strip. It must be constructed to tell a definite story and tell it in a definite sequence. Don't above all let the film strip be a light-weight substitute for a set of slides.

In the list of media I have deliberately used the term "display" because I want to get the emphasis off "exhibition" which conjures up visions of vistas and vastness. Visual education needs the simple, the portable, the flexible. Such displays can be anything from the one-shot improvised paste-up to the multiple photographic silk-screen, or colotype job. In function it may be a leader-up, a finale, or a recapitulation of the whole subject. It may be so designed that it can be retained from year to year or have its component parts detachable and capable of re-arrangement; it can be flat, three-dimensional, and use true or distorted perspective. Displays are probably the most flexible of our media and enough to excite all but the most phlegmatic cerebration. Models come within the display section and should be used frequently. I would hazard a guess that the model has the greatest attraction and memory impressing value of any form of visual aid. Finally simplicity is the vital point to remember when planning displays as visual aids. The flat panel series idea, which has been well used by CEMA, is probably the best basis. The occasional application of a three-dimensional item to one of the panels will give a lift to the series when seen as a whole. One crumb of comfort for the local authority milch cow; expensive lighting gadgets need not be used at all in visual education display work.

If any of my friends in Canada read this article they will probably wonder why I've made no mention, before this, of my particular baby, the printed art. I have a particular reason. Here it is: the tremendous importance of that prime of the printing art—typography. It is no use commissioning and obtaining lovely drawings, paintings, photographs, charts and what you will, unless we have first-class typography and

lettering either to complete or to make a designed unit. These considerations are equally to all our media, not only to print work. One of the truisms of our day and one of the small number of citizens who do typography and layout as it should be done, and here I make a suggestion to make to your people in Britain and to Canadians who come here.

Go to a country churchyard and see what 18th-century country bumpkins left for us to see on their tombstones. Was there ever a frame or chart to equal the sheer beauty and legibility that records the passing of bumpkins and their ever-loving wife?

As I say, go to such a churchyard—preferably on rising ground—and visualise. See the flow of things in general. Look around—you are on rising ground—at the panorama of trees, stone, and life. You are now experiencing visual education by means of visual aids. Is it dull? Is it dead?

Of course it is not. The story of the land, the people, the past and the present have been alive. It whets the appetite—solid and liquid—so go down to the pub by the hopfield side of the scuddy mill stream. Brewing and milling, the story on each, local studies, interweaving social and economic justification.

Have I made this visual education material sound exciting? I hope so. We must approach such a job with enthusiasm, for enthusiasm breeds daring and banishes dullness. Children and all things young do not suffer dullness gladly. Neither do the young in mind. Do not let us have a surfeit of discussion. Do not let us have to learn a new alphabet or subscribe to the patenting of monotony.

Let us get right on and do things. Get them celluloid, paper, board, acetate, wood, and a hundred and one materials that we can go going round the corner, with an official of the firm grasped in our mitts. If we feel we are getting dull let us go and bounce a ball or a whodunit. Last week I felt far from scintillating so I picked up a thriller by Michael Innes and read: "I mind Rob Yule asking once: 'What is Visual Education?' and before the words could reply Will Saunders cutting in sharply: 'It's what Susannah afforded the elders to daft speak, and black affronted the school mistress.'"

Well, I don't know all about the elders. I'm sure none of us want to affront any school marm; but the film makers and the artists and designers will have to pull their weight in councils which will decide the future of visual education. We, the film makers and designers, know how to present a visually acceptable display. We know how to plan it, how to shoot and how to graphically portray it—and that is more than half the battle. If it is decided that visual education is the order of the day then the educationists must accept the guidance of trained practitioners in the visual arts. Remember that aids to Visual Education must be acceptable—nay, more than that, they must be capable of attracting and holding the attention with or without the aid of oral embellishment.

## THE SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCATIONAL FILMS

This article, by Dorothy Grayson, was written before the various educational associations had declared in favour of an educational film system approximating to what she calls below "Commissioned Production with Organised Distribution". Her detailed suggestions under this head go some way to answering "The Times Educational Supplement's" complaint in its issue of March 2nd that the memorandum issued after the conference of twenty-five educational associations on February 23rd offered no positive suggestions on the relationship between the film expert, the educational expert and the subject expert.

There are already a number of free films sponsored by Government Departments and by large commercial associations which, though in most cases not designed for the purpose, are useful in schools. It is hoped that the Ministry of Education will shortly allocate funds to encourage the production of films and visual units specially designed for school use, and this is a matter which is obviously of great interest to teachers. Various schemes have been put forward in view of this possibility. They fall into two main groups which may be called (1) *The Guarantee against Loss*, and (2) *Commissioned Production with Organised Distribution*.

### (1) The Guarantee against Loss

Under this scheme public money is to be used to encourage speculative commercial enterprise. This, it is believed, will discourage extravagance, waste and State domination of the content of education as a result of direct official provision of class-room material. It has been suggested that the Ministry of Education should provide funds to guarantee against loss any producer working on an approved treatment of any subject from a list to be prepared in consultation with teachers. The producer would retain copyright in the production and arrange distribution on a normal commercial basis. This seems unlikely to result in any immediate reduction in prices or simplification of distribution. At present there are nearly 200 libraries, some free, some charging up to 4s per day per 10-minute reel. Teachers would no doubt be consulted during production, but any organised use of the best teaching experience would appear to be unlikely under such a system. The method described would, however, stimulate supply and help towards meeting educational needs.

### (2) Commissioned Production with Organised Distribution

Those who support this scheme believe that more direct official action is essential to secure the necessary co-operation of the teaching profession, to reduce costs and to establish a unified and convenient system of distribution. They believe that efficient safeguards against extravagance, and against rigidity in the content and method of education can be devised. It is suggested that:—

(a) the Ministry of Education should institute a small Council of distinguished educationalists to act as the Governing Body of a permanent department;

(b) the Department should be staffed by experienced teachers who, with secretarial help and in consultation with teachers' organisations, should—

(a) draw up a yearly programme of films and visual units recommended for production, with the names of practising teachers who would be competent to advise on each;

(b) draw up a list of recommended British and foreign films, both amateur and professional, to be acquired for educational use;

(c) publish a cumulative loose-leaf descriptive catalogue of films, each supported by an appraisal based on reports from a network of teachers viewing groups;

(d) publish a journal;

(e) advise on projection arrangements, equipment and visual material;

(f) encourage, co-ordinate and make known the results of research, and make recommendations for grants for such work;

(g) recommend for grants teacher-producers of films and other visual material whose work merits encouragement.

(3) The approved programme of films should be commissioned by the Ministry of Education through the films division of the M.O.I. or whatever organisation is to take its place. Thus, while perhaps 5 per cent of the output would be the work of the Government Crown Film Unit, most of it would be done by various independent companies, and stereotyped official production would be avoided. It is important that originality and independent initiative and experiment should be encouraged in both professional and amateur production, and part of the allocation of the funds should be reserved both for the purchase of non-commissioned productions, and to help amateur production.

(4) Copyright of commissioned production would be the property of the Ministry of Education and there would therefore be no difficulty in using any of the material in other contexts. Copies of the material could be available to L.E.A.s and schools at the bare cost of printing and handling.

(5) A Central Distributing Organisation, a development of the official Central Film Library already in existence, should handle distribution to school and L.E.A. libraries, and to any Regional film offices which may be set up to hold reserves of films not in constant use by schools, and to carry on and extend the work of the present M.O.I. regional films officers. The Central Distribution Organisation would also act as a reservoir to meet large local demands for a particular film or other visual item, and to hold material which is likely to be used sporadically or infrequently.

(6) A condition of supply to L.E.A.s and to regional libraries, either free of charge or at prices based on printing costs should be their undertaking to allow all recognised schools, youth organisations and adult groups in their area to borrow the material free of charge, providing that they have the services of a competent projectionist.

(7) L.E.A. and Regional Film Offices should arrange to service projectors in their area, and to provide proper inspection and repair of the material in their libraries. They should provide for instruction in projection and elementary maintenance, and give facilities for the pre-viewing of films.

(8) The system of provision and distribution of films and visual units should not be such as to

preclude the ultimate provision of a comprehensive and unified service of educational visual material of all types. Regional film offices and L.E.A. libraries should work in collaboration with training colleges and University education departments, and particularly with any college in the area, which, as suggested in the McNair report, is specially responsible for the development of work on visual methods. They should work with public museums and libraries, and with the civic and children's cinemas which progressive local councils may be expected to provide. In town-planning schemes it may be possible to co-ordinate many of these in a visual centre.

### Democratic Safeguards

Official planning and distribution of films and visual matter should not lead to the rigidity of imposed syllabuses and methods or to any curtailment in educational freedom, but should provide an educational service to stimulate and enrich the work of the schools and youth organisations and of the community in general. The Board of Education was always scrupulous in emphasising its advisory function, and there is no reason to believe that the Ministry, despite its wider powers, would wish to depart from this enlightened and democratic attitude. But any centralisation has its dangers and certain safeguards against undesirable developments should be incorporated in the scheme which has been outlined. Thus:—

(i) The permanent Department would not be a part of the Ministry, and would be responsible, through the Governing Council, to the Body providing its finance. This may be the Ministry, or it may preferably be the Ministry and L.E.A.s jointly. Separation from the Ministry seems desirable as being likely to facilitate a free flow of independent suggestions and criticism from teachers, and to reduce any suggestion of official pressure to work on the lines developed in officially commissioned material.

(ii) The final appraisal of commissioned material should be based on the judgment of a very wide cross-section of the profession, by setting up a network of representative groups of educationalists. Such appraisals would provide guidance on the matter and treatment to be incorporated in future annual programmes for production.

(iii) As a further check against any possible tendency, remote as it now seems, to impose a rigid pattern on the educational system, it may be desirable to require the permanent Department to submit a detailed annual report on its work to the teachers' organisations, or to a large committee of their representatives.

(iv) Production costing of Government films would provide a yardstick to detect any extravagance in production costs.

(Continued on page 23)

## FILMS IN AUSTRALIA

By Harry Watt, who has recently directed a story documentary in Australia

AUSTRALIA is a very film conscious country. It has always had a desire to make films about itself and in point of fact, more than sixty films have been made. Unfortunately very few of these have been of any worth. The reason for this is mainly that they have been made by well-intentioned but unskilled locals, and the culture and technical abilities necessary for the making of films was lacking. Another and perhaps more important reason for the failure, was a slavish desire to imitate the films of English and American type. Very seldom did they realise that the only way to create a national cinema was to create national feeling and atmosphere in their films.

At present there are only two film makers of any standing in Australia. One is Ken Hall, the head of Cinesound Studios which, in addition to its production work, produces a weekly newsreel. Ken Hall has produced and directed about twenty features of all kinds. His biggest commercial successes, the "Dad and Dave" series, were slap-stick comedies about primitive out-back types, who are the equivalent of the American hill-billies. Many of these films are very funny, and have had considerable success in Australia and the provinces of England. They are disliked by the more intelligent Australian as misrepresenting their out-back folk, who are in fact the backbone of the country. Despite this, Ken Hall is a sincere and hard-working film maker. He is at present engaged on a film depicting the life of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. This film is financed by Columbia, and is the first which American capital has made in Australia.

The other film maker in Australia is Charles Chauvel. He has been struggling for many years on independent finance, and he has tried hard to put some of Australia's history and greatness on the screen. Unfortunately his scripts have seldom lived up to the size of his subjects, and the technical difficulties have made it impossible to get results commensurate with his ambitions. He had, however, one spectacular success, *Forty Thousand Horsemen*, a story of the Australian Light Horse in the last war. This got world-wide release because of the exciting action sequence at the end. Chauvel was given the job of making Australia's big war film, *Rats of Tobruk*, the story of the Australian divisions which held out so long in Tobruk. Unfortunately in an unhappy attempt to inject synthetic box office appeal into this picture, the story line got extremely muddled, and it had to be reckoned as a failure. These two films, *Forty Thousand Horsemen* and *Rats of Tobruk*, were the only two feature productions made in Australia during the war.

Altogether Australia's film history in the war has been rather unhappy. Their Department of Information completely failed to make a film record of any worth of their great war contribu-

tion. Obsessed with newsreel technique, the Department officials practically ignored documentaries. Any attempts they made at film making were shoddy studio reconstructions. The only exceptions were one or two films made by Ralph Smart (who had been trained in Britain) for the Air Force, and one film of New Guinea called *Jungle Patrol*, made by Tom Gurr, a Sydney journalist. The reason for this was mainly that there were no film men of any worth recruited into the Department of Information, and the Civil Servants were so taken in by the pseudo-glamour of the commercial film that they held documentary in contempt.

Yet the opportunities were endless. Amazing feats of ingenuity and enterprise were carried out in Australia without any film coverage. A highway to supply New Guinea was built right across Australia in a year. In Sydney, the world's largest dry dock was constructed under appalling wartime difficulties. In the unexplored north, air strips were cut out of the jungle in record time. And so on. To me coming from Britain, it was heart-breaking to see so many wonderful film chances thrown away. It was a heart-break also to find that responsible Australians felt this and everywhere one met a feeling of frustration and an appeal for help. Unfortunately the Civil Service had complete control, and I could do little.

Now a National Films Board has been created. It is based on the Canadian Board which operated so successfully during the war. Unfortunately six of the seven members of the Board are civil servants with little knowledge of film. The Commissioner appointed is a journalist rather than a film maker, and although enthusiastic and sincere, he is not the teacher that is the first necessity for Government films in Australia at the moment. The situation here is very similar to the situation in Britain fifteen years ago—a large amount of goodwill, a small amount of money, considerable enthusiasm but no one to direct it. Owing to the Australian resentment of external criticism, I am afraid that the type of films that will be produced by the Film Board will be self-laudatory rather than self-critical. And of course the critical films are the more important ones if they are to teach citizenship. Subjects like soil erosion, conservation of water, reforestation, etc., are crying out for films. Let's hope we get them. I am terrified that we will see kangaroos, Koala bears, and fields of waving wheat.

Film-making facilities, apart from the natural one of fine scenery and sunlight, are exceedingly poor, and Cinesound Studios are a converted skating rink. The majority of equipment is home-made. It is amazing in its ingenuity, but the very fact that it is home-made tends to a lowering of standards. If you make something yourself, you are delighted if it works at all, and do not worry

about the results it produces. The only other studio of any size is Pagewood, built in 1935, Gaumont-British specification, to make the fated *Flying Doctor*. Britain, on this film, made the usual hash of a goodwill gesture. Asked to send out a production unit, she did not send her top technicians. The film was a fearful flop. The result was that Pagewood went bankrupt, the equipment was dispersed and the first real chance of a film industry thrown away. This disaster was one of the things I had to live down. However, Pagewood is still a good sound stage, and I believe that it could rise like the phoenix from its ashes. Properly equipped, with up-to-date material, could be the centre of a small industry.

I believe that Australia can have successful film production provided it is kept modest and the right type of truly Australian outdoor subjects are undertaken. With the present inflated costs in Britain, action pictures can be turned out in Australia at a third the British prices. If they are any good, a considerable amount of the production costs can be recovered in Australia and with improved flying facilities, artistes can be used there as easily as they can in the north of Scotland. Also, for the first time, the outdoor action picture, which has been a monopoly of America and the backbone of their industry, can be challenged. The locale for subjects does not need to be restricted to Australia. Just as it was jumping-off ground to the whole of the East in wartime, so it can be a centre for films in the Islands, in Indonesia, and Malaya. There can be no thought of an Australian Hollywood arising but there is a great opportunity to establish at least a small worthwhile industry which, apart from providing entertainment and employment, could help to establish in Australia the cultural roots it is striving for at the moment as part of the basis of its newly found national consciousness.

What struck me most during my whole time in Australia was how little we know about it. For one thing, it is a continent, not a country. It's so called dead-heart contains some of the finest cattle country in the world. It has jungles as thick as any in Burma) and permanent snow country. It has enormous skyscraper cities, and "ghost" gold towns now without an inhabitant. It has a capital, planted in the middle of nowhere, that is as yet strongly reminiscent of Welwyn Garden City. Altogether it is an exciting young country with a lot of faults but enormous potentials. Many Americans found it similar to what much of the States was like eighty years ago. It is a country we should know about. And film is the medium to use for such knowledge. Which all boils down to the fact that I like Australia, and would like to make another film there.

## DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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# THE R.A.F. FILM UNIT

Few people will forget the shots of Genoa looking like a lake of fire in the surrounding darkness with the bursting bombs adding to the terror of the scene. Or the shots of the German planes, looking very close, disintegrating in the sky. Or the coast of France, still occupied by the Germans, approaching the camera as our planes went in for a low-level daylight attack. These shots are part of history and we record some facts about the unit that produced such magnificent, even if horrifying, material. Results were not achieved without cost. Thirteen members of the Unit lost their lives and five were taken prisoner. The story of the R.A.F. Film Unit is a fine one and we are happy to have been able, by courtesy of the Air Ministry, to give this brief account of its activities.

The R.A.F. Film Unit was not started until the end of 1941. Its main purpose was to provide a film record of the part played by the R.A.F. in the war, but it was also to provide material and films to outside organisations, to film technical developments that could only, for reasons of security, be shot by R.A.F. personnel, and to make training films for internal consumption.

Men and equipment presented problems—A.C.T. helped with the former—but it was not until 1942 that the fifty members of the Unit moved from their one room in the Air Ministry to the airier spaces of Pinewood. Running a film unit on Service lines was no easy job, but under the successive leaderships of W/C Twist, W/C Baird and S/L Moyna this unorthodox set-up was fitted into Technical Training Command.

The Unit at Pinewood became known as "No 1 Film Production Unit" and was the base from which all filming at home and overseas was planned. No. 1 FPU was the parent Unit which "led" the overseas detachments which covered R.A.F. activities in the Middle East, North Africa, Western Europe, U.S.A., Canada, South-East Asia, the Azores, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Sicily, Greece, Yugoslavia, Malta, Gibraltar. The units serving abroad covered the Middle East campaign up to the victory in Tunisia, the Anglo-American assault on North Africa, the landing in Italy at Salerno, the fall of Rome, the invasion of Southern France and the Greek landings. In S.E. Asia they filmed fighter and bomber operations against the Japanese. In Europe, Unit No. 4 filmed the war from D-Day across Europe into Germany. Unit No. 4 also had the job of filming the evidence of our bomber offensive for use in future operations. It was they who fitted the cameras into the wings of Typhoons and Tempests to cover the sensational rocket attacks. The material thus obtained was of great use to the designers of this new weapon, and to the tacticians who planned its use.

At home the Unit was making such films as *Operational Height*, *The Big Pack* and *Journey Together*. These films were primarily designed to make the non-fighting people in the R.A.F. feel that their job was important.

One sound film, eight reels in length, was produced to be shown on one or two days only. It happened in July, 1943, when an American officer visited W/C Twist and asked for his help on a most urgent matter. The result was that for seven days, with only three breaks for sleep, a section at Pinewood worked continuously, under conditions of the utmost secrecy, to produce a 16 mm. film which, when completed, was immediately flown out to North Africa. The film was a complete sound and visual briefing for the pilots who, a few days later, smashed the great oil centre of Ploesti.

Perhaps the most unusual use to which the Unit's productions were put occurred in 1944

when a special request was received from the French for some R.A.F. films to show in the Department of Savoy. The Maquis were in control at the time but they were ringed by the German armies, and when the R.A.F. delivered the films they had to cross the German lines to do so. The films were shown in cinemas at which special collections were made for a Maquis hospital.

It was S/L Moyna who persuaded someone to let him fly with a cameraman in 1942. No one liked the idea at all but it was to result in the special film flight in Bomber Command as well as planes specially fitted for cinematography in Coastal Command and the Second Tactical Air Force.

The value to the public of the vivid action pictures secured by the "Ops." cameramen and shown all over the world does not need to be emphasised, but their value to the Service, perhaps is not so clearly understood. Here are some of the achievements of operational cinematography: On daylight attacks conclusive evidence was obtained of the accuracy and intensity of the bombing and the precise route followed could be examined afterwards to check any deviations from the planned course; films made at night could be examined to show, not only the accuracy and concentration of the attack, but its development—particularly the speed with which the fires built up in the target areas; bombs and bombing gear have been re-designed because FPU pictures revealed weaknesses, previously unsuspected; "chance" shots of technical interest were obtained—e.g. pictures of the "shock waves" of bombs exploding and the German anti-aircraft weapon the "scarecrow". The film that undoubtedly aroused the greatest technical interest was the Unit's record of the sinking of the *Tirpitz*; the film shows precisely where each of the 12,000 lb. bombs exploded and has been minutely studied, frame by frame, by air, naval and ordnance experts. Another strip of film that made history was secured by an FPU Mosquito that accompanied the first low-level attack on a V.I. site. Operational cinematography as developed by the Unit is now a permanent Air Force requirement.

At Pinewood six small rooms housed the entire organisation for covering all operations of every Command of the R.A.F., nevertheless, there was hardly a single raid of major importance after July, 1943, that was not filmed by an R.A.F. cameraman from Pinewood. The section was in direct contact by "scrambler" telephone with Operational Commands and was kept informed of impending operations; such strict security rules were observed that, when a call about a planned operation was expected, other personnel in the studios were not allowed to use the passage past the Ops. section's rooms.

Pinewood was an operational base from which

men went straight to war: cameramen who left the studios by car in the morning were in action over occupied territory within a matter of hours; others breakfasted at Pinewood after a night over the Ruhr. Nine members of the "Ops" Section, including S/L Moyna, were awarded the D.F.C. and three others received the Croix de Guerre for their work covering the operations of the famous Lorraine Squadron of the R.A.F.

All FPU material was made available to the Newsreel Companies free of cost. On their side, the newsreels co-operated by presenting to the public a fine pictorial record of the work and achievements of the Royal Air Force throughout the war. Extensive use was also made of the Unit's material in the War Pictorial Newsreel, circulating in the Middle East, and, although no statistics are available, it is also known that stories provided by the FPU have been widely used by newsreels in America and other parts of the world.

## THE SUPPLY OF EDUCATIONAL FILMS

(continued from page 21)

The probable cost of the scheme alarms some people. Either the right visual material is potentially so valuable that it must be made available—and there is much evidence that this is so—or it is not. If it is, then the problem of costs must be faced. It is important to realise that, since more than 95 per cent of our educational institutions are maintained from the Treasury and Local Council funds, practically all production and distribution costs and profits on educational material, even under unsubsidised speculative enterprise as in the case of textbooks, come ultimately from public funds. But a spate of speculative film production, from which the pattern of educational requirements could be expected to emerge by selective demand, is for various reasons highly improbable. Some form of official action appears to be essential. Planned and commissioned production costs no more than provision by speculative enterprise, even without the guarantee against loss, and may well be the more economical as well as the more efficient way of meeting teaching needs.

Those who believe that visual material is valuable in education cannot ignore the issues.

## THE SCIENTIFIC FILM ASSOCIATION

The SFA Catalogue of Films of General Scientific Interest is due to be published at 5/-. Orders are now being taken at the SFA head office, 34 Soho Square, W.1.

# NEW NON-THEATRICAL FILMS

THE following films have become available during the last three months on the M.O.I. Mobile Film Units, and through the Central Film Library. A programme typical of those given to general urban and village audiences would be represented by one of the magazine films, *Britain Can Make It*, with the first four listed below. Factory audiences receive shorter programmes, say a magazine film with one of the first three films. The first twelve films have been shown regularly to many kinds of audiences in all parts of Britain, the others on special occasions or by request.

**The Last Shot.** Produced for the British and Netherland Governments. *Camera and Direction:* John Ferno. *Musical Direction:* Muir Mathieson. *Commentary:* written by Arthur Calder-Marshall. 16 mins.

This film has all the qualities of directness and economy one expects from Ferno. The delirium of Liberation Day in Amsterdam is contrasted with the devastation and famine accompanying the early months of peace, the ruined streets, the breached dykes, the salt-drenched fields, the pastures robbed of their Friesian cattle, the dreariness of enforced unemployment through lack of coal and raw materials. Each aspect of war's uncomfortable aftermath is underlined with telling visual illustrations. Particularly moving are the parentless Dutch children, "anonymous citizens of tomorrow, the little old men and women of Europe." The film ends with a reminder of the new spirit in Europe and of the need for the more fortunate nations to make sacrifices to help these despoiled territories. Altogether this is a most salutary and impressive document.

**Public Opinion.** *Production:* Verity for D.A.K. 15 mins.

A lively A.B.C.A. discussion film on the various forces which mould public opinion. All the direct and indirect influences are shown—newspapers, magazines, popular digests, posters, exhibitions, casual conversation, argument, oratory, radio, films. Opinion is shown being mobilised through voluntary movements, political parties and trade unions. The points are made briefly and dramatically, and the film ends on a disarmingly humorous note. The responsibility of the individual towards all this is brought out.

**Penicillin.** 20 mins. (Reviewed *D.N.L.* Vol. 5, issue 48, p. 77.)

**Fenlands.** 19 mins. (Reviewed *D.N.L.* Vol. 6, issue 51, p. 8.)

**Myra Hess.** *Production:* Crown for M.O.I. 11 mins.

This film is made out of material shot for Jennings' *Diary for Timothy*. It shows the famous pianist (who at times appears to be distressed by the lighting) playing the whole of one movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata*. Well-shot, well-recorded and sensitively edited, it has great intrinsic interest for a concert-goer.

**Round Pegs.** *Production:* Shell Film Unit for M.O.I. 15 mins.

This is a short non-specialised film edited by Sylvia Cummins from the full length *Personnel Selection in the British Army 1944—Recruits*. (Reviewed *D.N.L.* Vol. 6, issue 51, p. 9.)

**Proud City.** 26 mins. (Reviewed *D.N.L.* Vol. 6, issue 51, p. 8.)

**Total War in Britain.** *Production:* Films of Fact for M.O.I. *Producer and Editor:* Paul Rotha. *Script:* Ritchie Calder and Miles Tomalin. *Music:* William Alwyn.

This translation of the White Paper on the British War Effort into film represents a successful fulfilment of an important function of documentary—the interpretation in simple human terms of official documents and statistics. Actuality shots and animated isotypes are used to clarify and humanise the detail and argument of the White Paper.

**Worker and War Front. No. 18.** 11 mins.

Items: (1) Razed Buildings Raise Playing Fields; (2) Magnesia; British Sea and Lime Save Imports; (3) Planning in the Potteries.

**Britain Can Make It. No. 1.** 10 mins.

Items: (1) Concrete Drydocks; (2) Motion Study in Factory Production; (3) War Artists Exhibition in London.

**Britain Can Make It. No. 2.** 10 mins.

Items: (1) Works "Uncles"—Better Factory Relations; (2) Bathrooms off the Belt; (3) Workers' Fashion Parade.

These three cine-magazines were produced by Films of Fact. *Worker and War Front 18* is the last number of a notable wartime series which, in spite of occasional lapses into triviality, has maintained a high standard of content, camera-work and editing. No. 18 is one of the best of these issues; particularly lucid and well shot is the middle item on the manufacture of magnesia. *Britain Can Make It* is a new series for peacetime, to be released non-theatrically month by month. The main item in No. 1, on motion study, is a highly effective piece of movie exposition; Sir Stafford Cripps adds a few words of approval for psychological and physiological aids to a more rationally organised form of manual work. The original wartime commentator, Colin Wills, returns with No. 2, to which Basic have contributed a well-photographed section on the prefabrication of bathroom and fireplace units. Wills' robust clarity make him obviously the right choice for the series whose main outlet will be on sub-standard film.

**The Plan and the People.** 20 mins. (Reviewed *D.N.L.* Vol. 6, issue 51, p. 8.)

**It Began on The Clyde.** *Production:* Greenpark for M.O.I. *Producer:* Ralph Keene. *Director:* Ken Annakin. *Original Story:* Brian Smith. *Photography:* Charles Marlborough. 15 mins.

This is a more successful example of the "personal narrative" style of exposition than some recent attempts. A harassed G.P. and his patient, a rundown shipyard worker, provide the thread for an account of how Scottish Emergency Hospitals were diverted, in the absence of battle casualties, to civilian needs. The evolution and working details of the Clyde Basic Scheme are described.

**Achimota.** *Photography and Direction:* John Page for M.O.I. *Commentary:* written and spoken by Dr. Julian Huxley, F.R.S. *Music:* recorded by African Choirs in Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. 19 mins.

A useful description of life and work at the twenty-year-old co-educational Achimota College on the Gold Coast. The College has Secondary, Teacher-Training and First-year University Departments, and teaching of academic sub-

jects, of arts and crafts related to African life and of scientific husbandry are shown. Special value is attached to the training of women teachers in a region where only one in eight of the population receives any education at all.

**The Story of Money.** Gryphon for Banking Information Services. 15 mins. (Reviewed in *D.N.L.* Vol. 5, issue 49, p. 92.)

**It Might Be You.** *Production:* Crown for M.O.I. *Producer:* Basil Wright. *Director:* Michael Gordan. *Photography:* Fred Gamage. *Recording:* Charles Poulton. 15 mins.

This film aims at shocking audiences into an awareness that it is the carelessness of ordinary people, pedestrians, cyclists and motorists that lies at the back of most road accidents. A family out in the car for an afternoon run, a cyclist who warns his daughter to be careful before he leaves her, and a young fellow whose pleasurable anticipation of meeting the girl friend helps to make him into a jay-walker are the characters. In the final accident, the pedestrian is killed, the cyclist shaken up, and a young boy in the family car loses an arm. Deft characterisation, an air of casualness, suspense and an uncompromising dénouement are all made to contribute, without over-emphasis or sensationalism, to the desired effect.

**Man—One Family.** *Production:* Ealing Studios for M.O.I. *Director:* Ivor Montagu. *Editor:* Sidney Cole. *Scientific Advisers:* Professor J.B.S. Haldane, F.R.S., and Dr. Julian Huxley, F.R.S. (who also speaks the commentary). 18 mins.

A title explains that the M.O.I. produced and translated this film into sixteen languages to show in Liberated Europe.\* It is a shrewd, hard hitting, very popular-styled anti-Fascist essay on the fallacies of race purity and race superiority. As might be expected from Montagu and Cole, the treatment is extremely lively. Newsreel sequences and animated diagrams are effectively mixed together, and there is an amusing cartoon sequence to illustrate the libellous comments on other nations of a self-righteous sixteenth century Scot. While it carries an outside punch, this film gets across a number of serious and important truths about human relationships.

**Lessons from the Air.** *Production:* Merton Park Studios for British Council. 15 mins.

Behind-the-scenes organisation and personalities of School Broadcasting. Made for overseas theatrical release, this is a pleasant film. School Broadcasting is, however, one of the big successes of British Broadcasting; there is room for a more detailed analytical study of its evolution and other activities.

**Channel Islands.** *Production:* Crown for M.O.I. *Producer:* Basil Wright. *Director:* George Bryant. *Photography:* Jonah Jones. 16 mins.

The story of life on the Islands from the first arrival of the predatory if *ganz korrekt* Germans to the early days of liberation in 1945. Many of the people of the Islands, and particularly those active in the underground movement, reenact the parts they played in those days.

(Continued at foot of next page)

\* Nevertheless we hear that the European Section of the C.O.I. has decided that it is not suitable for export at present.

## DOCUMENTARY IN DENMARK

DENMARK WAS ONCE one of the principal film producing centres in Europe. Her films were famous all over the Continent. The arrival of sound greatly curtailed the industry, for outside Denmark the Danish language is understood only in Norway: it is not generally comprehensible even in Sweden. Whether it is because of traditions handed down from silent days, or whether it is because the Danes are naturally a frugal and efficient people, they have managed to make the production of Danish studio features pay their way in spite of a language group of less than eight million people. And even though the highest budget dare not exceed £15,000 (shades of Gaby Pascal!), some of the films surpass the standards reached by British features costing ten times as much, witness Carl Dreyer's *Vredens Dag* (Day of Wrath) and *Den usynlige Hær* (The Invisible Army), a film on the Danish resistance movement directed by Johan Jacobsen, who formerly worked in Britain with Strand.\*

Denmark also has a flourishing documentary industry. As in Britain, but unlike most other European countries, Danish documentary looks to the Government and, to a lesser extent, to industry for sponsorship. In consequence there has been some sort of economic continuity with the excellent double result that Danish documentary workers have been able to gain experience and a certainty of touch, and the Danish Government has a cultural asset of great national and international importance. Finance for the films comes partly from a tax on cinema receipts which is devoted to cultural ends including film production, and partly from grants from Government departments and national associations for films to serve particular and usually more specialised needs. Distribution is handled

both theatrically and non-theatrically. Each cinema is compelled by law to devote a small proportion of its screen time each month to a short—usually 10-minute—Government reel. In this way a system has been developed not unlike the British 5-minute film scheme introduced so successfully early in the war. Non-theatrical distribution is hampered by a shortage of projectors, but since the firm of Petersen and Poulsen builds an excellent 16 mm. sound projector, Denmark may presently find herself well placed in this respect.

When the Germans invaded Denmark, the feature and documentary film technicians were in two minds. Should they cease work completely, thus abandoning their screens to U.F.A. and the enemy and destroying—perhaps irredeemably—something peculiarly their own? Or should they attempt to keep their industry going, attempting to maintain their film culture intact without allowing it to be diverted to serving the interests of the Germans? The Danish technicians, like their comrades in France, decided on the latter course. In addition, they developed an underground film movement, secretly recording life under the Germans. They even managed to export material to England via Sweden, and many technicians played an important part in the powerful Danish underground movement.

Films made for public distribution during the occupation were confined mainly to studies of national institutions and industries, though a few practical films were made on such subjects as road safety and health. Most of these films seem today a little strange and remote, for the Nazis made both public service in any genuine sense and personal expression in any profound sense impossible.

Since the liberation, Government sponsorship has enabled the Danish documentary movement

to avoid—at any rate in part—the aestheticism which has diseased other documentary schools all the way from Prague to Paris. The fact that Danish films are made to serve a public purpose has kept them practical and healthy. The relationships between film makers and the Government and the choice of film subjects reflect social problems already familiar in Britain. Take, for example, the twenty-five Government documentaries under consideration, planned, or in production at the end of 1945. They include films on drinking water, on the reception of refugee children from Holland, on safety in industry, on the railway postal services, on lighthouses, on American visitors in Copenhagen, on the problem of the shortage of domestic help, and on the relations between the citizen and the army. Films already circulating tackle road accidents, blood donors, child welfare, salvage and a dozen other subjects as familiar in Britain as they are in Denmark.

It is not possible here to do more than to isolate a few examples of films for special notice from the eighty completed between January, 1941, and December, 1945. All are beautifully photographed: they dance with light. Their musical accompaniment is nearly always effective, and Kai Rosenberg is in the front rank of documentary composers. To British taste music is sometimes introduced where none seems necessary—as in Hagen Hasselbalch's excellent film on the life cycle of a toad—*Tudsen*. Sometimes, too, there seems to be a clash between music and picture. Søren Melson's pleasantly conceived *Kutter H.71* (Sailing Boat H.71) is not improved by a flippant jazz score, to which however the film is most ingeniously—almost too ingeniously—cut. Indeed, many of the films display remarkable virtuosity in their editing, though this very virtuosity is sometimes self-

(continued on next page)

\**Vredens Dag* was reviewed in D.N.L. (Vol. V, issue 50, p. 103). Both films will shortly be presented in London at the Academy cinema.

## New Non-Theatrical Films (continued from page 24)

**Library of Congress (American Scene Series).** O.W.I. 19 mins.

An enquiry about copyright provides an opening link between a mobile library truck in the Virginia Hills and the Library of Congress. The film is then mainly an account of the history and facilities of the Library, with its six million books and pamphlets and four hundred and fourteen miles of shelves. There are scenes showing reading rooms, air-conditioned store rooms, filing systems, Chinese writers in the Oriental Division and mechanical devices for transporting request slips and volumes. Original manuscripts and documents, like the Declaration of Independence, give an opportunity for a discussion of the beginnings of American democracy. Early newsreels from the Library's cinema archives are included and sociologists in the field are seen recording Negro and hill billy folksongs. This film would make a useful item in any programme on civics and the Social Services.

**Training in Mechanised Mining.** Production: Films of Great Britain for M.O.I. 26 mins.

This clear and well-made account of the work of the Sheffield Mines Mechanisation Training Centre deserves the widest possible showing to audiences of those engaged in, or about to enter, the mining industry. Additionally, it has con-

siderable interest for people concerned with industrial training in other fields. The Centre was the first of its kind in the world, and for planning and equipment must, one imagines, be unrivalled. After stressing the human factor in mechanisation, the film opens with an account of welfare conditions and of the financial provisions made for men nominated as trainees from collieries all over Britain. There are specialised courses lasting from one to four weeks, but the film concentrates on the six-months' course for men with little previous knowledge. A thorough acquaintance with applied electricity is rightly stressed as the basis of training in mechanisation, and instruction is given in all the relevant aspects of D.C. and A.C. operation. In the fitting and machine shops, the trainee learns to interpret blue-prints and cope with the repair and erection of machines. He is taught electrical and oxy-acetylene welding. The most spectacular side of the Centre is in the model galleries; the extent to which these simulate realistically working conditions is shown by cutting in actual underground scenes for comparison. Galleries are devoted to typical workings and mechanised set-ups, Roman Pillar, Long Wall, Duck Bill, etc. One gallery carries signalling devices. The whole treatment is interesting to the lay spectator, who will derive

from it a reasonably adequate notion of mechanised mining.

**Land Drainage.** Production: Realist for I.C.I. Director: Brian Smith. Photography: Cyril Phillips. 20 mins.

**Sugar Beet (Pt. 1: Cultivation; Pt. 2: Harvesting).** Production: Blackheath for M.O.I. Director: Ralph Cathles. 24 mins; 12 mins.

These agricultural films are workmanlike and efficient. *Land Drainage* is interesting both to layman and farmer. It shows how the water table in a typical catchment area is controlled through various types of drainage. The animated diagram work is exceptionally good. The agricultural film has to achieve, for discussion group audiences, a compromise between plain instruction and the more discursive techniques employed in adult education. This film carries plenty of useful fact, and, at the same time, has a pleasant human quality. Two Scientific Film Societies report, incidentally, that they have found it a very acceptable item in their programmes.

The two parts of the second film concentrate on the methods and equipment used on the average farm with about eight acres devoted to sugar beet. They deal with the preparation, drilling, cultivation and harvesting of the crop.

## Documentary in Denmark (continued from page 25)

destructive: Karl Roos' and Søren Melson's beautifully directed and photographed film on cattle—*Køen*—degenerates into a sort of ballet of slaughter-houses, meat, offal and heaven alone knows what besides. On the other hand, Bjarne Henning-Jensen's *Sukker* (Sugar) uses cross-cutting effectively to give a sense of people and their relation to the fields and factories in which they work.

One other quality in Danish films deserves attention—a kind of light-heartedness in the direct propaganda films which makes them particularly effective: at their best, they leave most British efforts in this direction behind. Indeed, perhaps the best of all the films made in Denmark is *Kornet er i Fare* (The Corn is in Danger)—a plea to the public to take precautions against the corn weevil and to call in the local pest officer. This sort of film subject has faced nearly every director in Britain. (Is there anyone who has not been asked at one time or another to make a film to persuade people to exterminate rats?) Yet no one has tackled such subjects with the gusto and imagination that this film displays. The corn weevils are given a collective evil personality which will send every cinema-goer hurrying to his larder, his corn bin or his barn after the performance. Imaginative scripting, clear direction, fine music and slick editing have been combined to produce a completely satisfying effect.

Finally, one must mention Theodor Chris-

tensen's masterly impressionist feature length study of Boumeister and Wain, the firm of ship builders, and Carl Dreyer's moving and finely directed *Modrehjælpe* (Mother Help—a film on maternal welfare) which, with *Kornet er i Fare* and *Sukker* is undoubtedly one of the three best films yet made in Denmark.

Denmark is one of the only countries in Europe, other than Britain and Russia, whose film makers and creators have been harnessed by the Government to serve the national purpose. For this reason, Danish documentary is firmly rooted and can give Denmark a place in the world of cinema which may be denied to larger, richer and more powerful countries which have not mobilised their film talent. The strength of her film school is its technical facility, its humour, its humanity, and its directness. Its weakness lies in the fact that the films have sometimes tended to play with surface values only, and to substitute technical virtuosity for the more solid qualities of exposition. Such weaknesses are mainly the product of the invasion. The practical problems of public information which the Danish directors are now tackling are bringing their own correctives with them. It is certain that the Henning-Jensens, the Hasselbalchs, Christensen, Skot-Hansen, Melson, the Roos', Dreyer, Rosenberg, Palsbo and a number of others have between them a splendid range of talent. It seems likely that Denmark has a place assured for her in world documentary.

## FILM TITLING

by Barnet Freedman

PRODUCERS and directors of films are not to be expected to know about type, lettering and display design, for this is a highly specialised activity. Its application to the film has not received a great deal of study in the past. In this country the experiments made, judging by the achievements, have been negligible, and although an insistent vulgarity pervades American productions in this sphere, they have at least gone to a fair amount of trouble and obvious expense to obtain their results. Even if a high level of taste and scholarship has not been achieved, some startling and novel effects are certainly to be observed. Movement and "filmic" texture, colour and arabesque are used with considerable ingenuity, and the resultant vitality often contributes to the general liveliness of otherwise pedestrian films. A close study of American work in this department of film making reveals that they possess highly expert technical men and machines engaged solely on the production of film titles.

In England this work is either on a level with *Comic Cuts* or else it is over "refined" and bloodless. The dead hand of someone with a little knowledge is often discernible. A few firms exist who carry out instructions slavishly and without imagination, firms employing highly skilled craftsmen, who could if they were required to do so, produce work of a very fine technical standard. In fact, their work lacks character, is often vulgar, and there is little evidence of any attempt to exploit a field which offers immense opportunities to an imaginative designer. The work is obviously ordered to satisfy a producer who is generally ignorant in matters concerning type and display, who is himself too overwrought with the larger aspects of film making to give the matter much attention, and who is often unable to state his requirements until the last moment. The manufacturing firms have then to hurry and rush through the titles at the eleventh hour; experiments and alterations cannot be made: what is done has to be "good enough".

The crux of the whole matter is that the perfectly efficient and fine lettering craftsmen, employed by the title manufacturing firms, require independent and expert direction and guidance. This they do not receive. An artist who has proved himself to be first-class as a designer of lettering and display work, a man who has not only scholarship and taste, but great technical ability too, should be asked to study the subject. He should be afforded all the technical help and advice that can be procured. In the course of two years he should be requested to design and produce various sets of titles, which would exploit all the film is capable of in this branch of the art.

(Continued on page 29)

## SIGHT & SOUND

Spring 1946

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# TELEPEDAGOGICS

SHOULD one congratulate University College, Exeter, for having been so enterprising as to found a Visual Education Centre, or condole with them for hatching out such a very academic chick? With its four years' start over all other institutions in Britain and most institutions in other parts of the world Exeter can yet become a focus for information and experiment about every kind of visual technique in education. It can yet make decisive contributions to the theory and practice of the subject. It can help teachers to make the best use of such materials as already exist. It can help them to formulate policy. It can help them to procure the kinds of visual equipment, including films, they need. It can help producers to overcome the technical and psychological problems at present inseparable from the production of teaching films. If Exeter does not do these things, someone else will take the job over, and Exeter will have thrown away an opportunity to contribute to the cultural and educational life of the globe. It is still uncertain whether Exeter will be able to profit from its enterprise in spite of its four years' lead. The Visual Education Centre seems to be attempting to establish theory without an adequate groundwork of practice and observation in the classroom; windy generalisations, overdressed with words, come pouring out when one wants simple statements of principle; Exeter is taking what can be the fatal path of being interested in the organisation of educational organisations for its own sake.

All this is a pity, for somewhere in the verbosity, confusion of categories, muddled thinking, heresy hunting and dogmatics, there is sometimes to be found good sense. For example, the insistence that the film must not be separated from other visual techniques, and that these in turn must be considered in relation to "the totality of education techniques" is sound. Pleas that teachers must not only understand but command the making of films for the classroom cannot be repeated too often. Claims that the work of the private film maker—the "amateur"—must be considered alongside that of the professional will be endorsed by everyone who believes that the film can and must become a handy instrument of public expression.

These grains of good sense have to be separated from a deal of chaff. Examine, for instance, the recent Exeter publication—*Visual Education and the New Teacher*, by G. P. Meredith.\* Typographically hideous (should not visual education begin at home?), this booklet seeks to orientate the teacher towards the new visual media which are coming tumbling into his classroom. It also attempts to establish the necessity of introducing a universal system of schooling based on the Dalton plan. What may be called the Exeter touch is revealed on page 9 where is introduced the term *telepedagogics* (Oh, Semantics! Oh, Linguistics! Oh, Fiddlesticks!) After giving Scotland a drubbing for whittling down the film till it has scarcely any function to perform other than to illustrate a lesson, Meredith enters into an interesting consideration of the "freedom" of the teacher. He comes to the con-

clusion that "freedom" in the classroom, however desirable, is rarely or never attained. The teacher's work is consciously or unconsciously determined by the textbook which is "the oldest form of prefabricated instruction". Indeed, Meredith argues that it is not the teacher but the textbook writer and the textbook publisher who largely determine the curriculum.

Meredith drops this interesting argument on page 19 and does not return to it till page 47, where he asks the fundamental question, are teachers going to command the visual media which will presently come flooding into their classrooms, or are they going to repeat the mistake of their Victorian and Edwardian forbears and hand over their prerogative to the publishers—that is, in this case, to the speculative film producers and Wardour Street? Though Meredith makes it clear that he is on the side of the teachers every time, his attempts to describe an organisation by which they shall get what they want is both timid and obscure.

What lies between pages 19 and 47? It is a little difficult to say, for Meredith rides several hobby horses, loses himself in history and confuses his categories in a way which would make Immanuel Kant turn twice in his grave and sneeze. Seeking to show that mechanisation and standardisation have been an inseparable part of educational

technique at least since the invention of movable type and that, far from mechanising teaching, machines can help to humanise it, Meredith gives up a page and a half to listing important inventions which have influenced the technique of teaching. What might have been an interesting paragraph in the present book or an interesting monograph by itself is expanded to a chapter in which justice cannot be done to the subject and which robs the book as a whole both of continuity and perspective. Dropping history Meredith then worries away at the Dalton plan, where again he has interesting things to say, but by now the structure of his book has become overloaded and malformed.

From page 47 or so the book meanders on to the end, expiring less with a bang than with a whimper in a couple of pages of summary which make this wordy, inconclusive and misty book even more wordy, inconclusive and misty than it might otherwise have been.

The London Scientific Film Society showed a series of films on Asdic on Sunday, February 17th. Geoffrey Bell's most recent film *Personnel Selection—Officers*, had its première at the Society on March 17th. A new Danish film, *Tudsen* (The Toad) was also screened.



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### PENICILLIN

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Other films in production will be announced when completed. Applications for the loan of these films should be made to the Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7

\* *Visual Education and the New Teacher. A Study of Children and Machines, of Organisations and Men.* G. Patrick Meredith. A Daily Mail School Aid Publication for the Visual Education Centre, Exeter. 1946. Pp. 64.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Documentary Film, 1922-1945. (The Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1946.)*

This is the printed programme of a series of film shows arranged by Miss Iris Barry to be presented at the Museum of Modern Art between January and July this year. People who take the whole syllabus will be able to see masterpieces from half the countries of the world. Here are newsreels by Pathé made in Seville in 1909; *Kino Pravda* from Russia, *Nanook of the North*, Bruce Woolfe's *The Battle of the Somme* (it is a little sad that one cannot see this early British masterpiece without crossing the Atlantic), *The Covered Wagon*, *Grass*, *Berlin*, and *The Plow that Broke the Plains*. The British school is represented by a score or more of films—*Housing Problems*, *Enough to Eat*, *Night Mail*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Industrial Britain*, *Transfer of Power*, *The Londoners*, and many others. *Drifters* alone is missing because "the negative has been mislaid somewhere in Britain." Luckily it has been found again, and perhaps Miss Barry will be able to squeeze it in, for no historical review of documentary can be complete without it. Here too is a splendid selection of the best wartime films from Britain and America. The printed programme is detailed and accurate; it is a work of reference in itself. Altogether the occasion is a notable one, and British documentary is under an obligation to Miss Barry for so magnificently displaying its works.

*Bernard Shaw Among the Innocents. E. W. and M. M. Robson. (The Sydney Society. 1946. 1s. 6d.)*

A wild and not altogether successful smack at Bernard Shaw, whom the Robsons not only accuse of besmirching the British way of life, and insulting the Royal Family, but also make responsible for everything they conceive to be iniquitous in British films from *Colonel Blimp* to *The Madonna of the Seven Moons*.

*The Art of the Camera. Frederick Young. The Film Director. Charles Frend. Screen Writing. Bridget Boland. The Film as a Visual Art. George Pearson. The Documentary Film. Donald Alexander. (The British Film Institute, 1946.)*

These booklets are reprints of lectures given at the Film Institute's 1945 Summer School devoted to Film Appreciation. Frederick Young, Charles Frend and Miss Boland attempt a brief and objective description of the processes of film making from their own particular points of view, and their three books together make a useful and interesting symposium. Pearson and Alexander approach their subject from a critical rather than from a descriptive point of view, and it is interesting to contrast their outlooks. Pearson has all of thirty years' film work behind him. His reputation dates back to the 'twenties when he became a famous director of silent films. Today he is making no less useful if less spectacular films for the peoples of Africa at the Colonial Film Unit. For him the film must appeal directly to the emotions or it is nearly valueless. One feels he would not recognise, or at least would not like, the school of film aesthetic with its roots in public service and public education which Alexander expounds in his most stimulating paper. Not that Alexander would avoid emotion, but for him emotion must grow out of the circumstances dealt with in the film, and not out of a



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more or less artificial clash of sex or personality. It must come from the presentation of information "in such a way that the audience is thrilled and excited and prepared to accept the information, not necessarily as true, not necessarily as the last word on the matter, but as *important*—as having bearing on their own individual lives". For Alexander, "the greatest single need of our time is . . . to achieve coherence, to get people to understand and believe that their own lives, scientific knowledge, and the machine, are all part and parcel of the same coherent 'thing'—'humanity'." The documentary film, he argues, has been developed in answer to "a crying social need . . . to use every means at our disposal to combat [the present] incoherent situation, with its devastating effects on humanity, culminating in two world wars in twenty-five years". From a broad general treatment of his subject, he passes on to a detailed examination of the documentary film, its uses, and the changes he considers to be necessary if it is to flourish. He ends with a trenchant plea to decentralise film making. He would break down what he conceives to be its London isolation. He would send out the filmmakers to live and work in the great cities in the Midlands and the North, fitting their efforts into a nationally conceived plan.

Alexander's pamphlet provides a most useful answer to the often repeated question: What does Documentary really mean? It is constructively critical at the same time.

## FILM TITLING

(Continued from page 26)

A responsible film organisation, possibly in co-operation with a number of important film companies, the Central Office of Information and the various documentary concerns, should found between them a chair, scholarship or bursary to enable the artist to go into the whole subject thoroughly. He would produce titles which were static, and others which had movement. He would experiment fully with the use of colour, types old and new, hand-drawn letters, cut-out letters, scripts, roman capitals, italics and half-uncials, moving backgrounds, moving captions, illustrations, decorations, lights and shadows, transparencies, superimpositions, perspectives and fade outs. Indeed, every method of tampering with the three dimensions and their manifold possibilities would be fully gone into, to the lasting benefit of the British film industry. The right man would produce a volume of work that would set a high standard. A distinguished textbook could be published on the final results, which should have a great sale for students and practitioners of the film.

The fee paid to a designer should bear some relation to the vast sums of money spent annually on rubbish. Most of the important film companies in this country buy rubbish, like it, and understand nothing else. They will not consider these remarks of any merit whatever. Perhaps the documentary film makers, who have a great sympathy and understanding of such subjects, will get together and do something about it.

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# TWO FILMS FOR THE THEATRES

**Town Meeting of the World.** Crown for M.O.I. monthly release. *Producer:* Basil Wright. *Director:* Graham Wallace. *Distribution:* C.F.L. 12 mins.

After a commentary introduction the sound track of this film is simply Clement Attlee's opening address at the United Nations General Assembly in London. But after scenes of the actual meeting with Attlee speaking in his unimpassioned but straightforward and reasoning style, the cameras of the world are made to give us pictures of the human content of the ideas he conjures up. The misery in the faces of refugees, the heroism of D-Day commandos, the coldly displayed horror of the Belsen corpses, the demonstrations of liberated towns show what he means by "great sacrifices", "the common good" and "our great task". Scenes of the tilling of the soil in Europe and Asia, the harvesting of familiar wheat and unfamiliar cane, point the content of his oration when it speaks of world nutrition; we see our slums and "foreign" slums, when he speaks of standards of living.

*Town Meeting of the World* foreshadows an interesting new approach to film. It is natural that it should come from documentary, and particularly from Crown, which of all the documentary units, has shown most often that it has a lively and sensitive "film ear". Perhaps because

this film seems something in the nature of an exercise in a new variation of technique—with a social and political orientation—it seems to have had a cool reception from the critics. It has disciplined its scope and pattern to Attlee's speech—that is the "script"—and sketches in the human tones, making of that speech a permanent, instead of transient, creative work enriched with emotional quality, making it something even greater than it was. The critics do not seem to have seen it as more than just another film.

The dramatic significance of what Attlee said, in the main, was felt only by people who could invest his words with a meaning personal to themselves. Many people are not able to do that kind of thing at all easily—as the psychologists say, only a minority of the population is capable of conceptional thought. *Town Meeting of the World* is important because it shows one way to help people to see *themselves* as involved in the tasks which humanity has before it.

**Cyprus is an Island.** Greenpark for M.O.I. *Director:* Ralph Keene. *Photography:* George Still. *Script:* Laurie Lee. 34 mins.

In three reels, this film successfully gives an overall impression of the little-publicised Mediterranean Island which has a history dating back

into antiquity. The main thing lacking is the political fact that the inhabitants feel more closely allied to Greece than to Britain, and that successive British Governments, determined to maintain Cyprus as a Crown Colony, have indulged in numerous and not very pleasant repressions of the islanders' legitimate aspirations.

Considered filmically, this is a beautiful job of work—as good as any we have had in Ralph Keene's style, and he has been more than competently served by his cameraman and script writer. Every shot is a joy to watch and the film flows in a smooth, effortless manner. Economic and agricultural problems such as afforestation, soil erosion and drought are presented with clarity and freshness, revealing the fundamentals and defining the solutions in terms of human effort and modern ideas, overcoming age-old prejudices and, sometimes, sabotage. The old goat-herd, for instance, who can only think of revenge against a whole community when his goats are no longer permitted to eat the young trees, is an almost lovable and intensely human character acting his part with a vigour that would put most professional actors to shame. Altogether, an interesting film, beautifully shot, but evading some of the important political issues which have concerned the Cypriots in recent years.

## THE TECHNIQUE OF ANAESTHESIA

(Continued from page 31)

film might well be supplemented by a second part dealing with simple methods of resuscitation (e.g. Leonard Hill's method of inversion), suitable for out-patient departments or domiciliary surgery.

*Operational Shock* is a concise presentation of the factors which contribute to the development of shock during the course of a surgical operation. The part played by anaesthesia, especially when inefficiently managed, is clearly indicated.

*Handling and Care of the Patient* presents an aspect of operating theatre work which is sometimes neglected because of divided responsibility. This film, which is well planned and executed, provides lessons for all members of the theatre staff—nurses, anaesthetist and surgeon.

This series of films is a notably successful effort to provide fundamental instruction in the administration of anaesthetics by means of well-directed photography accompanied by adequate, clearly enunciated commentary. Anaesthetics, taught didactically, too often produces merely somnolence in the listener. The subject is so essentially practical that its pictorial presentation, as seen in this series, is much more effective than hours of lecturing. In the overcrowded medical curriculum of today, in which the time allotted to the subject of anaesthetics is so little, this series of films, covering the main practical points of instruction, must be welcome to teacher and student alike. For the latter, the preliminary knowledge gained will enable him to proceed with greater intelligence and confidence to actual clinical practice.

Much credit is due to Drs. Magill and Organe and their colleagues on the anaesthetics staff of the Westminster Hospital, who, under first-class professional production, have made the films.

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# The Technique of Anaesthesia

A series of eleven films made for I.C.I. by the Realist Film Unit in 1944-45. Reviewed by an anaesthetist.

Title	Director	Length in mins.
1. Signs and Stages of Anaesthesia	Margaret Thomson	23
2. Open Drop Ether	" "	30
3. Nitrous Oxide—Oxygen—Ether Anaesthesia	" "	24
4. The Carbon Dioxide Absorption Technique	Yvonne Fletcher	22
5. Endotracheal Anaesthesia	Margaret Thomson	24
6. Intravenous Anaesthesia, Part I	Yvonne Fletcher	30
7. Intravenous Anaesthesia, Part II	" "	25
8. Spinal Anaesthesia	" "	35
9. Resuscitation	Rosanne Hunter	16
10. Operative Shock	" "	15
11. Handling and Care of the Patient	" "	25

The films were produced by John Taylor and photographed by A. E. Jeakins. They are distributed by the Central Film Library to specialised audiences only.

The primary requirements of the student of medicine, respecting his knowledge of the administration of anaesthetics, have been carefully considered in the preparation of this series of instructional films. Fundamental features of the induction of inhalational anaesthesia are accorded detailed attention. They are best demonstrated, as in films Nos. 1 and 2, during the administration of Open Drop Ether. The signs and differentiated stages of anaesthesia, as induction proceeds, are brought out convincingly, and the clearness of their demonstration cannot fail to stimulate the keen student to elicit them for himself in actual practice.

*Open Drop Ether* is comprehensive in essential technical details. Humorous treatment of the results of unintelligent methods of administering ether emphasises the several serious faults which must be avoided. A very helpful recapitulation of the major instructional points is included in the commentary.

*Nitrous Oxide—Oxygen—Ether* illustrates a method of anaesthesia with apparatus. By means of moving diagram and commentary the mechanical working of anaesthetic machines is lucidly explained. The regulated flow of nitrous oxide and oxygen from the cylinders to the flowmeters and through the apparatus to the patient, and the vaporisation of ether by the gases, is well shown diagrammatically. Fractional rebreathing, a feature which many students find difficult to understand, is made clear, as is also saturation of the tissues by the anaesthetic agent during the maintenance period.

*The Carbon Dioxide Absorption Technique* shows the physical and chemical processes taking place in closed anaesthesia with carbon dioxide absorption. Soda lime canisters, as used in single-phase and two-phase absorption techniques, are described and their working principle illustrated by excellent animation. The use of cyclopropane and the method of "controlled respiration" are also treated clearly.

*Endotracheal Anaesthesia* is the best example in this series of the great value of the film in teaching practical intricacies of technique. Endotracheal intubation, with which the film deals, is an important refinement of anaesthetic practice which, all too frequently, is badly performed by the anaesthetist. One showing of this film, with its excellent photography of the living anatomy of the larynx, its clear explanation by diagram of the exposure of the vocal cords by the laryngoscope and the introduction of a tube into the

trachea, will eliminate most of the difficulties which the novice experiences in acquiring the technique and which his teacher has in describing it to him. The general excellence of this film is enhanced by the fact that in it future generations of anaesthetists will be able to see and hear one of the greatest contributors to progress in anaesthetics—I. W. Magill.

As befits a method which has acquired great popularity and importance during the recent years of war, the treatment of the two parts of *Intravenous Anaesthesia* is detailed and extensive. Close observation of the anaesthetised patient, a particularly important factor when intravenous drugs are employed, is so well emphasised throughout this film that the statement that the patient requires little or no attention after

operation comes as an anti-climax and must be considered misleading to the inexperienced. The preparation of apparatus, technical points in venepuncture and the controlled injection of the anaesthetic agent are done thoroughly. Difficulties and dangers which may arise are well demonstrated and the ways of treating them are explicit. An omission here, however, is the danger which may arise from coughing or sneezing during certain ophthalmic operations performed under intravenous barbiturate anaesthesia. The scope of intravenous anaesthesia, a debatable field at present, is treated with commendable conservatism which will help to prevent the abuse of the method and protect its status as one of the best and safest methods of anaesthesia.

*Spinal Anaesthesia* (the more correct term, "analgesia", is slow in finding favour) deals with the subject adequately, in so far as the main principles underlying good technique are concerned. It does not, however, reach the high standard of the early films in the series in quality of performance, and leaves room for improvement.

*Resuscitation* is a short film, illustrating methods of resuscitation in cases of respiratory failure and cardiac arrest occurring during anaesthesia. In so far as it depicts all the resources of a well-equipped operating theatre and the skill of an experienced team of surgeons, anaesthetist and nurses coming into timely action, this film is good and serves a useful purpose. Respiratory failure and cardiac arrest, however, have a disconcerting habit of occurring more frequently in the field of minor surgery, in operations such as circumcision and tonsillectomy, and often in out-patient departments where facilities are poor and the medical staff junior and inexperienced. This

(Continued at foot of opposite page)

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